



## SUMMER READS STIR CREATIVITY IN THE KITCHEN

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Maybe it's the idea of entertaining when schedules are less hectic, or the promise of luscious summer produce, but plenty of new cookbooks on the market are inspiring us to get back into the kitchen this summer.

Last month, we outlined some new grilling books (see the link with this story at [sfgate.com/food](http://sfgate.com/food)). Here are a few more favorites:

**"Beyond the Great Wall."** If you've been bit by the travel bug, this book is not to be missed. Part travelogue, part recipe collection, it works both in the kitchen and on the coffee table.

Veteran authors Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid venture outside the main cities of China to explore the culture and cuisine beyond, providing vignettes, recipes (Silk Road chickpea-carrot fritters and Tibetan sweet tea, to name just two) and vivid photos from areas like Tibet, Yunnan and Guizhou.

*"Beyond the Great Wall," by Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid (Artisan, 376 pages, \$40).*

**"Bon Appetit, Y'all."** Having worked as a television producer, food stylist, writer and kitchen manager for Martha Stewart, Virginia Willis knows good recipes. This selection, however, is close to home for the author, who was raised on the cooking of her Southern mother and grandmother and attempts to modernize some of the recipes she knew as a child.

Upscale twists on home-style dishes are a theme. Adding grated Vidalia onions, chopped chives and sweet corn to basic grits, for example, elevates the recipe to a starring side dish.

The recipes can find a home in any cook's kitchen, especially if those cooks long for the rich, historical flavors of the South.

*"Bon Appetit, Y'all," by Virginia Willis (Ten Speed Press, 312 pages, \$32.50).*

**"Fish Without a Doubt."** Last summer, we fell in love with local fishmonger Paul Johnson's seafood cookbook, "Fish Forever." This year, we've added "Fish Without a Doubt" - a solid primer by Las Vegas chef and leader in the sustainable seafood movement Rick Moonen - to our collection of favorites.

One of the best chapters lists every imaginable type of seafood, with a few paragraphs on what to look for when you purchase, how to cook it, and how it should taste. It is a great reference point if you're experimenting with a



new recipe or variety of fish.

Step-by-step photos in the beginning of the book illustrate techniques such as removing pinbones or deveining shrimp, and recipes like lobster gazpacho or fennel-crusting tuna are seasonal and accessible.

Without being overly preachy, the book gives tips on how to become more environmentally conscious when choosing and eating fish, and lists resources for more information.

**"Fish Without a Doubt,"** by Rick Moonen and Roy Finamore (Houghton Mifflin, 496 pages, \$35).

**"Mediterranean Fresh."** Few chefs know Mediterranean ingredients as well as San Francisco chef Joyce Goldstein, who has written nearly two dozen cookbooks on the subject. In "Mediterranean Fresh," she's chosen to focus on salads from the area.

That doesn't necessarily translate to light or low-fat bowls of greens. Goldstein believes that salad can be the main event, evident in recipes like paella rice salad or Israeli Chopped Salad with Avocados (see recipe, right).

The layout is a bit busy and can be confusing to navigate, but recipes, ideas and interesting combinations are in great supply.

**"Mediterranean Fresh,"** by Joyce Goldstein (W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 352 pages, \$30).

**"The Spice Bible."** Your spice cabinet shelters inhabitants that have been there since the Reagan era. You know you want them; you're just not sure what to do with them. Now there's a seductive new book that will inspire even the most salt-and-pepper-loyal cooks to experiment with new seasonings.

**"Bible"** accurately describes this hefty volume. Broken down into spice categories like seeds and pods, berries and flowers, roots and bark, and spice pastes and mixes, there is no shortage of ideas, explanations, storage tips and uses.

Try your cloves in Kashmiri lamb cutlets, or use saffron to scent crusty arancini. The options are endless. Just don't be alarmed if you need to re-stock those decade-old spice jars.

*"The Spice Bible,"* by Jane Lawson (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 448 pages, \$29.95).

**"Wine Bar Food."** Wine bars and small-plate restaurants may be relatively new to the Bay Area, but for Europeans and those living around the Mediterranean, they've long been a meeting place to enjoy regional wine and good food.



Each chapter becomes a guide to the tastes of a specific locale - goat cheese and fava bean crostini in Nice, for example, or falafel crab cakes in Seville.

Though information on wine is scattered throughout, this is more about the enticing small plates with which it is served.

*"Wine Bar Food," by Cathy and Tony Manuano (Clarkson Potter, 198 pages, \$27.50).*

**"Without Reservations."** San Francisco chef Joey Altman knows his way around a professional kitchen - he's worked in several around the country, and has hosted some of the world's top toques on his local television show, "Bay Cafe."

But family and friends expect restaurant-quality meals even on his off nights, and in his first cookbook, Altman focuses on using bold and balanced flavors to "adapt the lessons of the restaurant kitchen to the home."

That means he doesn't offer too many 30-minute meals, but he does make dishes like Pimenton Chicken with Piquillo Pepper Sauce seem do-able. In fewer than five steps, you'll have an impressive, rustic entree good for a large family or small dinner party.

*"Without Reservations," by Joey Altman, with Jennie Schacht (Wiley, 274 pages, \$35).*

## **MORE: MEMOIRS, FOOD POLITICS**

They're not exactly beach books, but if you're not spending the summer in the kitchen, check out other recommended summer reading. The following books will allow you to brush up on food politics or get lost in a memoir.

**"Bottomfeeder"** by Taras Grescoe (Bloomsbury, \$24.99, 327 pages). If you're a seafood lover, pick up this guide to which fish are the best for our bodies and which are best for the environment.

**"God in a Cup"** by Michael Weissman (Wiley, \$24.95, 268 pages). Coffee connoisseurs will get a kick out of the author's detailed and tireless journey to find the perfect cup.

**"The Compassionate Carnivore"** by Catherine Friend (Da Capo Press, \$24, 291 pages). What's the difference between grass-fed and grain-fed? How much better is organic? Friend answers these questions while instructing readers on how to eat meat while respecting and understanding the source.

**"The Devil in the Kitchen"** by Marco Pierre White (Bloomsbury, \$15.99, 258 pages). Published in the United States for the first time, this is the tell-all memoir by the first British chef to win three Michelin stars. It's the United Kingdom's equivalent of Anthony Bourdain's "Kitchen Confidential."



**“The End of Food”** by Paul Roberts (Houghton Mifflin Co., \$26, 390 pages). A candid, frightening but comprehensive glimpse at the future of our food supply if we don’t take action to fix the food economy as we know it.

“We’ve Always Had Paris ... And Provence” by Patricia and Walter Wells (Harper Collins, \$26.95, 317 pages). A memoir by author and cooking instructor Patricia Wells and her husband Walter, retired executive editor of the International Herald Tribune, about their lives in France. For a full review, see the link with this story on [sfgate.com/food](http://sfgate.com/food).

- Amanda Gold

## **PIMENTON CHICKEN WITH PIQUILLO PEPPER SAUCE**

### **Makes 4 servings**

Adapted from “Without Reservations” by Joey Altman with Jennie Schacht (Wiley, \$35). Altman says to use a picante (“hot”) pimenton for the spiciest dish, dulce (“sweet”) for a mild one, or a mixture of the two or agridulce (“bittersweet”) pimenton for something in between.

- 1/2 cup sliced almonds
- 1 1/4 cups extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon pimenton
- -- Kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- -- Freshly ground black pepper
- 4 bone-in, skin-on chicken leg-thigh quarters (about 3 pounds)
- 1 cup piquillo peppers or roasted red bell peppers, peeled, seeded, veins removed
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 4 stone-ground wheat crackers or saltines
- -- Chopped cilantro or flat-leaf parsley, for garnish (optional)

**Instructions:** Preheat the oven to 350°. Spread the almonds on a baking sheet and toast for about 8 minutes, until fragrant and golden. Set aside to cool. Turn off the oven.

In a large bowl, stir together 1/4 cup of the olive oil, the 3 tablespoons garlic, the 2 tablespoons pimenton, 1 tablespoon salt, the cumin, and 1 teaspoon pepper. Poke the skinless side of the chicken all over with a fork or paring knife. Coat the chicken with the spice mixture, cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

Remove the chicken from the refrigerator, allowing it to sit out for 15-30 minutes as you preheat the oven to 375°.



Place the chicken in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet and bake until cooked through, about 50 minutes. (Cooking time will vary depending on the size of the pieces.) You should see the meat pulling away from the bone, with about 1 inch of bone visible at the drumstick. The skin should be crispy and golden brown. Transfer the chicken to a warm serving platter.

While the chicken cooks, make the sauce. Puree the remaining 2 teaspoons garlic, 1 teaspoon pimenton, the piquillo peppers, almonds, lemon juice and crackers in a blender or food processor until nearly smooth. With the motor running, drizzle in the remaining 1 cup of oil until the mixture is well blended. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Spoon some of the pepper sauce over the chicken pieces and serve the rest in a bowl on the side. Garnish the chicken with chopped cilantro or parsley, if desired.

The calories and other nutrients absorbed from marinades vary and are difficult to estimate. Variables include the type of food, marinating time and amount of surface area. Therefore, this recipe contains no analysis.

## **TOASTED CUMIN CITRUS DRESSING**

**Makes 1 1/3 cups**

- 2 tablespoons cumin seeds
- 1 cup mild, fruity olive oil
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (optional)
- -- Sea salt
- -- Freshly ground black pepper

**Instructions:** Toast the cumin seeds in a small skillet over low heat, stirring occasionally, until fragrant; it will take just a minute or two. Grind the seeds in a spice mill, then whisk together with the remaining ingredients, adding salt and pepper to taste.

**Per tablespoon:** 95 calories, 0 protein, 1 g carbohydrate, 10 g fat (1 g saturated), 0 cholesterol, 1 mg sodium, 0 fiber.

## **ISRAELI CHOPPED SALAD WITH AVOCADO**

**Serves 4**

From "Mediterranean Fresh," by Joyce Goldstein (W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., \$30).



- 2 ripe avocados, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 cup walnuts, toasted and very coarsely chopped
- 1 1/2 cups diced celery, cut 1/2-inch thick
- 1 1/2 cups diced seeded cucumber, cut 1/2-inch thick
- 1/2 cup finely chopped red onion
- -- About 1 cup Toasted Cumin Citrus Dressing (see recipe)

**Instructions:** Combine all of the ingredients in a salad bowl and toss. If you like, you can serve this on a bed of greens, with the same dressing. Serve at room temperature.

**Per serving:** 755 calories, 8 g protein, 20 g carbohydrate, 76 g fat (10 g saturated), 0 cholesterol, 58 mg sodium, 8 g fiber.

## GRITS WITH CORN & VIDALIA ONION

### Serves 4-6

From "Bon Appetit, Y'all," by Virginia Willis (Ten Speed Press, \$32.50). When we tested this dish at The Chronicle, the milk curdled slightly when poured into the onion and corn mixture. We continued with the recipe and the results were successful.

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 onion, preferably Vidalia, grated
- -- Scraped kernels from 2 ears fresh sweet corn (about 1 cup)
- 2 cups whole milk
- 2 cups water
- -- Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 cup stone-ground or coarse-ground grits
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3/4 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (about 3 ounces)
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives

**Instructions:** In a heavy-bottom saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, until transparent, about 2 minutes.

Add the corn and cook, stirring occasionally, until the kernels become soft, about 5 minutes.



Add the milk, water, and 1 teaspoon of the salt. Bring the mixture to a boil over high heat. Whisk in the grits, decrease the heat to low, and simmer, whisking occasionally, until the grits are creamy and thick, 45-60 minutes. Stir in the butter, cheese, parsley and chives. Taste and adjust for seasoning with salt and pepper.

**Per serving:** 285 calories, 11 g protein, 31 g carbohydrate, 13 g fat (7 g saturated), 31 mg cholesterol, 278 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.

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